From: Donald C. Strimbeck
To: Richardson, William; Werner Loehlein; Steve Garvin; Skip Pratt; Scott The Missing Link Link; Ryan Dean; Robert Sheedy; Richard Walters; Richard Collier; Peggy Sue Miller; Paul Hamrick; Paul B. Brown; Patrick Campbell; Mike Withers; Mike Manypenny; Melissa O'Neal; Nelson, Mark; Reynolds, Louis; Leroy Stanley; Merrill, Larry; Joseph Swearman; Capacasa, Jon; John Yesenosky; John Snyder; John M. Love; John M. Angiulli MEPCO; Forren, John; John Flynn; John Eleyette; John Duda; John Duarte; Joe Lapcevic; Jim Sconyers; Jim Evans; Jim Ammer; Jerod Harman; Jerald Fletcher; Jason Walls; Greg Bellich; BORSUK, FRANK; Erin Halloran; Emily Perrotta; Ed Wade; Don Spencer; Don Garvin; Deb Fulton; David Wellman; Dave Johnson; Dave Bean; Daniel Soeder; Cynthia Loomis; Curtis Meeder; Cookie Coombs GMCVB; Constance Miller; Charlie Byrer; Bryan Moore; Brent Wiles; Bob Wells Zinka-Ent Inc; Bob Ventorini; Bill Wyant; Bill Schuller; Bill Byrne; McFadden, Angela
Sent: 7/10/2013 5:17:40 AM
Subject: Fw: DAILY UPDATE 10 July 2013. News of interest to Mon river watershed denizens.
Attachments: DUNKARD CREEK-10JulyY2K13.doc

Don Strimbeck, Sec/Treas
Upper Mon River Assoc
UpperMon.org
MonRiverSummit.org
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----- Original Message -----
From: Donald C. Strimbeck
To: Tom Bond ; Tom & Barbara Bartlett ; Teresa Crane ; Sophie Cash-Goldwasser ; Shari Wilson ; Sera Janson Zegre ; Senator Jack Yost ; Sandra Fallon ; Rose Edington ; Robert Vagnetti ; Rick Humphreys ; Rich Rodriguez ; Rich Dennis ; Renee Jensen ; Peter Cuffaro ; Patti Miller ; Mike Buchanan ; Mary Rae Benson ; Martha Schwab ; Marigrace Butela ; Louanne Fatora ; Leigh Cedar ; Leigh Ann Keener ; Kitty Lozier ; Kevin Yokum ; Kevin Logan ; Kevin Coyne ; Kathleen Cash ; Julie Archer ; Joyce Johnston ; John Wirts ; John Lozier ; John King ; John Goldwasser ; Joe Gorman ; Jim Snyder ; Jessica H. Greathouse ; Jennifer Lynn ; Jay Bucklew ; Jannette Barth ; Jack Thompson ; Howard Clark ; Horse Park USA ; Gregory A. Niverth ; Glen Kelly ; George Racin ; Garry Berti ; Frank Blaskovich ; Estelle Lombardi ; Erich Emery ; David Beard ; Connie Watson ; Cindy Ashworth ; Chuck Wyrostok ; Chip West ; Casey Junkins ; Casey Griffith ; Carol Mapstone ; Candace Jordan ; Bruce Edinger ; Brian Osborn ; Brian K. Parker ; Brent Cassell ; Bonnie Hall ; Bill Yahner ; Bill Weiss ; Bene Bonfili ; Ashley Petraglia ; Amelia Plank ; Aaron Williams ; Dave Cassell
Sent: Wednesday, July 10, 2013 5:15 AM
Subject: DAILY UPDATE 10 July 2013. News of interest to Mon river watershed denizens.

DUNKARD CREEK-10JulyY2K13

----- Original Message -----
From: Diane Pitcock
To: Don Strimbeck ; doddridge-watershed@googlegroups.com ; Frack Check WV ; Editor e-news ; Tom Bond ; Marcellus Mailing List
Sent: Tuesday, July 09, 2013 6:36 AM
Subject: article to share from journalist covering Sunday's well site explosion

Please forward this e-mail to all in your address book, as it gives a detailed report of the well pad explosion in Doddridge County that is getting a lot of other media attention these days. It is interesting to compile and review the various reports on this particular incident coming from TV, newspapers, and radio and evaluate the statements given by company spokespersons as well as WV DEP. Here now, you have an interview with the eyewitness who heard and saw gas venting (and loudly) that was occurring on the well site throughout the day and evening hours just before the explosions took place at 4 am which rattled their windows and woke them up. As result, they were able to observe the fires on the pad that followed the explosions and the flaring of the other well bore that was occurring at the same time, as seen in the picture in the article.

Below is an article written by Tara Lohan, Senior Environmental Editor of Alternet.org Ms. Lohan has recently turned her

attention toward fracking issues and exploring drilling industry impacts in rural WV. Last year, she visited some drilling locations in WV through the WV Host Farms initiative.

Ironically, Ms. Lohan was back in Doddridge County this past week to return for more touring of gas well sites. It was sheer chance that she happened to still be here when we experienced the well pad explosion on the Erwin Valley site in New Milton early Sunday morning. On Friday, July 5th, she was brought over to our home by another WV Host Farms volunteer whose home she was staying for several days. She was able to observe this Ruddy well pad being flared while she was visiting our place that evening. None of us knowing that in less than 48 hours this very well site would encounter explosions and be completely shut down as result of workers being injured and the subsequent OSHA investigation.

After viewing the flaring of the well pad on Friday evening, on Saturday, several WV Host Farms volunteers escorted Ms. Lohan and her traveling companion, who is affiliated with change.org on a tour to see additional well sites. These were in Doddridge and Tyler counties. Included were some of our other WV Host Farms locations ....the EQT site at the Crowder/Wentz farm, the Jaybee site at the Jackson's farm in Tyler County, the Mark West Sherwood Plant site (via public rail trail access) the home of the Ervolina's, Daggett's, and several other locations. Ms. Lohan was able to conduct extensive interviews with these landowners who shared their experiences with her.

When the explosion occurred at the well site above our home, Tara was still staying at the Daggett's home. So she returned to our home Sunday morning to interview John about what he witnessed of the Sunday morning explosion, as well as what he had observed occurring up on the well site all day and evening on Saturday, just hours before the incident.

We do expect that Tara Lohan will be returning to WV repeatedly. During this visit, she was able to interview and photograph in Doddridge, Tyler, and Harrison Counties, but she realizes that we have a lot more to show her including sites in other counties.

The following article was the result of her coverage of the well site explosion in New Milton....

http://www.alternet.org/fracking/explosion-rocks-natural-gas-drilling-well-marcellus-shale-west-virginia

Explosion Rocks Natural Gas Drilling Well in Marcellus Shale, Workers Seriously Injured

A day after an explosion in the rural community of New Milton, West Virginia residents are still awaiting answers about the cause and the damage.

----- Original Message -----
From: Melissa Troutman
To: Sent: Tuesday, July 09, 2013 12:56 PM
Subject: Independence from Fracking - July 11 - SW PA

Independence From Fracking Statewide Rallies July 11th - Southwest PA Advisory

Call Melissa Troutman, Outreach Coordinator, Mountain Watershed Association, 724-455-4200 ext. 6#

The movement to stop shale gas fracking impacts in Pennsylvania is growing, but some elected officials need help getting on board with their constituents. Millions of American's celebrated our nation's independence last week, and this week Pennsylvanians will rally for independence from the toxic contamination, pollution, and devastation that is spreading across the Commonwealth from shale gas development.

Please join us for a peaceful rally at the offices of state Senators Don White (R-41), Kim Ward (R-39), and Richard Kasunic (D-32) beginning at 11:00 AM this Thursday, July 11th to address each Senator about a moratorium on shale gas in Pennsylvania. A moratorium would cease new shale gas fracking operations, allow time to address impacts that have already happened, and provide space to democratically address whether the full-scale implementation of shale gas is really what's best for our state. Without comprehensive land use planning or health and environmental studies, the industry's roll out across our bountiful Commonwealth is short-sighted and risky at best.

Pennsylvania needs a plan, not a gamble.

We will gather at Senator White's office in Murrysville (3950 William Penn Highway, Suite 1) at 11:00 AM, break for lunch, then visit Ward's office in Greensburg (1075 South Main Street, Suite 116, Westmoreland Crossroads Plz) at 1:00 PM. Next we'll visit Senator Kasunic's office (1192 University Drive, Dunbar) around 2:30-3:00 PM.

Then we're off to Idlewild Park in Ligonier to celebrate our day of civic duty!

----- Original Message -----
From: S. Tom Bond
To:Sent: Tuesday, July 09, 2013 8:43 AM
Subject: Fracking explosion in Doddridge County

http://www.alternet.org/fracking/explosion-rocks-natural-gas-drilling-well-marcellus-shale-west-virginia

Explosion Rocks Natural Gas Drilling Well in Marcellus Shale, Workers Seriously Injured

A day after an explosion in the rural community of New Milton, West Virginia residents are still awaiting answers about the cause and the damage.

July 8, 2013 |
Editor's Note: Tara Lohan is traveling across North America documenting communities impacted by energy development for a new AlterNet project, Hitting Home. Follow the trip on Facebook or follow Tara on Twitter.

An explosion at a nearby gas drilling well pad jostled John Pitcock awake around 4 a.m. on Sunday morning. Pitcock and his wife Diane moved with their sons from the Baltimore, Maryland area to rural New Milton, West Virginia in Doddridge County nearly a decade ago to enjoy a quiet country life. But when drilling companies began tapping the underlying Marcellus Shale in the area for natural gas reserves using high-volume horizontal hydraulic fracturing (or fracking), their peaceful country life disappeared.

The Pitcocks have been plagued by noise, lights, dust, emissions and truck traffic after a neighbor leased his land to a drilling company, which has erected several well pads on the land adjacent to their property. Over the last year trees have been clear cut, miles roads built through their rural neighborhood, and drilling begun. On Friday, July 5 I visited their home and witnessed gas being flared from a well through the night — the light illuminated their front yard from a ridge top about 2,000 feet away.

John Pitcock reported that the well continued to flare through the next day and night and another well beside it was loudly venting gas on and off. What became a nuisance turned to a real fright during the early morning hours of Sunday as John describes:

The Pitcocks were initially told (after driving off their property to find employees working nearby and emergency response officials) that they needed to evacuate, but were later told it was optional and they could remain.

Since then conflicting reports have emerged about the number of workers injured and the severity of their injuries at the well pad, which is officially called the Hinterer 2H well on the Ruddy Alt pad and is operated by Antero Resources. The *West Virginia Gazette-Mail* reported at least seven injured and at four or five workers were flown to West Penn Burn Center in Pittsburgh.

The West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection and the Doddridge County director of emergency services did not return phone calls as of publication. While the cause of the fire hasn't been determined, writing for the *Gazette-Mail*, David Gutman explained that this is not the first safety issue that Antero has had recently:

Last August a spark at an Antero-owned well in Harrison County ignited methane gas several hundred feet underground, causing a fireball and a fire that burned for about an hour. Three workers were injured in that fire.

DEP cited Antero for failure to maintain well control for that incident.

DEP has cited Antero for 17 violations of state code in the past three years. Those have been primarily environmental violations -- for things like failing to prevent waste runoff, failure to report discharges and contaminating waterways.

One violation, from January 4, 2013, warned, "Imminent danger water supplys [sic] threatened by allowing pollutants to escape and flow into the waters of the state."

In June of last year Antero was drilling using water in Harrison County when they accidentally repressurized some old water wells, causing several geysers, one about 10 feet high, that flooded one nearby home and several garages.

In March 2011, state regulators shut down an Antero gas well in Harrison County after mud contaminated with drilling chemicals spilled into a nearby stream.

John Pitcock says that he doesn't think companies should be drilling in this manner in proximity to people's homes.

Tara Lohan, a senior editor at AlterNet, has just launched the new project Hitting Home, chronicling extreme energy extraction. She is the editor of two books on the global water crisis, including most recently,

----- Original Message -----
From: Mall, Amy
To: cog@lists.earthworksaction.org
Sent: Tuesday, July 09, 2013 10:25 AM
Subject: [COG] FW: Gas industry, environmental group contribute $1.3 million to help CSU study natural gas emissions

Gas industry, environmental group contribute $1.3 million to help CSU study natural gas emissions
Written by Bobby Magill
Jul. 7, 2013 | coloradoan.com

Seven natural gas companies and industry groups are each contributing $150,000 to a Colorado State University natural gas emissions study, but the study will not identify which company is responsible for specific methane emissions.

CSU mechanical engineering professor Bryan Willson at the Engines and Energy Conversion Laboratory is leading the study, which will collect data from possible methane sources in natural gas transmission lines, including compressor stations and underground storage facilities.

Neither companies and groups involved nor CSU can divulge specific emissions data for any individual company's natural gas transmission systems because an agreement they struck keeps individual company emissions data confidential.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that the natural gas industry is responsible for 25 percent of the country's methane emissions —one of the most potent greenhouse gases fueling climate change —with transmission and storage accounting for about 30 percent of that total.

"Natural gas can be a reduced CO2 solution if done right; but if there's excessive leakage, it takes away a lot of the potential benefits," Willson said when the study was announced in June. "There's a huge uncertainty about the actual loss from the industry, from the well head to the burner tip, so this is part of a major effort to understand what that total methane loss profile is for the natural gas industry."

CSU spokeswoman Kate Jeracki said in June that a collaboration agreement among CSU, the Environmental Defense Fund and the companies involved required information about the study's funding to be kept confidential. The Coloradoan obtained both the collaboration agreement and the funding data from CSU using the Colorado Open Records Act.

Those documents show the energy companies and trade groups collaborating with Willson and the Environmental Defense Fund are contributing a total $1.29 million for Willson and his team to conduct the study, including $360,000 from the EDF and $150,000 each from CenterPoint Energy Gas Transmission, Dominion Transmission, Dow Pipeline Co., Interstate Natural Gas Association of America, Kinder Morgan, TransCanada and Williams Partners Operating.

The collaboration agreement bars any of them from publicly discussing how the study is being conducted or the results of the study except as part of a news release or the final public report itself. However, the groups and companies can share that information with their shareholders, employees and funders, but not the public at large, according to the agreement.

"It would be inappropriate to release the results of this study —really, any scientific study —before completion of the peer review process," Willson said Friday. "(The agreement) ensures a 'quiet period' while the study is being conducted."

The study's methodology and results will be made public with the final report, he said.

All the methane emissions data will be released with the final report, "but in a form that will not be assignable to a specific facility or company," Willson said. "This would allow other researchers to reprocess the data to determine the validity of the study's

conclusions."

He said that approach is common in health studies in which patient identities are kept confidential and studies of broad sector economic indicators in which companies provide "anonymized" financial projections to researchers.

Follow reporter Bobby Magill at twitter.com/bobbymagill.

I blog at: http://switchboard.nrdc.org/blogs/amall/

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Jul 9, 2013, 12:37pm EDT Updated: Jul 9, 2013, 1:42pm EDT

PITTSBURGH BUSINESS TIMES

First Energy won't convert coal-fired power plants to dual firing for now

Paul J. Gough

Last year, **FirstEnergy Corp.** was looking at its remaining coal-fired power plants along the Ohio River and West Virginia and considering whether to add boilers that would use natural gas.

The move, which would be costly and take place over several years, would allow the power plants to generate electricity from natural gas as well as the coal that has come under intense environmental scrutiny in recent years. The plants included three in southwestern Pennsylvania, including the Bruce Mansfield Plant in Shippingport, Mitchell Power Station in Courtney and Hatfield's Ferry in Masontown.

But after giving it thought, the Akron, Ohio-based energy company, which is also parent to West Penn Power, announced on Tuesday that it would close Mitchell Power Station and Hatfield's Ferry by Oct. 9 and lay off many of the 380 employees there. It'll also take off the table, for the time being, a move to add coal/natural gas-fired boilers at Bruce Mansfield and its remaining coal-fired power plants.

MORE: 2 local coal-fired power plants to shut

"It's something that we looked at with all our facilities," George Farah, vice president of fossil engineering and construction at FirstEnergy, said in an interview with the Pittsburgh Business Times on Tuesday morning.

But instead the company has decided that its coal plants would instead be retrofitted with equipment that will reduce their emissions to levels that are required under existing and potential federal regulations. Farah said that the obstacles to overcome in adding natural gas-fired boilers were just too great for the company to invest in them right now.

Among those obstacles were the large amount of capital required that would include new boilers, fire protection systems, and the cost of bringing the natural gas to the plants from pipelines. And beyond that, for the economics to work, the price of natural gas has to below where it is now for a sustained period.

"Add all those things up and at this point" it's not feasible, Farah said.

The Bruce Mansfield Plant has some equipment to reduce mercury, nitrus oxide and acid gas. FirstEnergy is working

with an engineering firm to enhance its cleaning systems at Bruce Mansfield. FirstEnergy has announced plans to deactivate 11 coal-fired power plants, including the two in southwestern Pennsylvania revealed Tuesday. It doesn't expect to close any more but it has a team that evaluates how current and future environmental regulations affects them.

"We are concerned about future regulations," Farah said.

EARLIER: First Energy considers gas co-firing plants

The Mitchell and Hatfield's Ferry shutdowns will leave FirstEnergy with a fuel mix of about 56 percent coal. That's down from 64 percent in 2012 before the previous shutdowns, according to spokeswoman Jennifer Young.

"The combination of the continued slow economy plus the environmental regulations that we know about and the uncertainty of the future ones led us to this decision today," said Farah.

The closing of the two plants will leave as many as 380 employees out of work. The employees were told Tuesday morning.

Chuck Cookson, executive director of labor and safety, said that FirstEnergy was working with employees and Utility Workers Union of America Local 102 to find jobs within the company for some of the workers.

"We have a lot of good people (at the plants) that we'd like to find places for but it'll be difficult," Cookson said.

The union has been told that the deactivation will happen sometime between Sept. 9 and Oct. 9.

Sen. Pat Toomey, R-Pa., blamed the Obama administration for the decision to close the plant.

"Coal is a domestically sourced, low-cost form of energy which helps sustain jobs for Pennsylvania and beyond. Over the decades, coal-fired plants also have gone to impressive lengths to reduce emissions," Toomey said in a prepared statement. "Nevertheless, the Obama administration continues to implement policies that will make energy more expensive for hard-working Pennsylvanians while destroying good, family-sustaining jobs."

Paul J. Gough is digital producer at the Pittsburgh Business Times. Contact him at pgough@bizjournals.com or 412-208-3827.

----- Original Message -----
From: Lorne Stockman
To: 'Sharon Wilson' ; 'Jessica Ernst'
Cc: 'cog'
Sent: Tuesday, July 09, 2013 4:28 PM
Subject: RE: [COG] Catastrophe Lac Meégantic 06/07/13

Hi,

Yes indeed. Refineries in Quebec City and New Brunswick are running both Bakken and Eagle Ford crude as it is cheaper than light crudes from the Middle East and Africa. US crude oil export regulations allow for exports to Canada. This trade has grown from about 60,000 b/d in 2012 to 130,000 b/d in April (the latest month EIA currently has figures for).

It is likely to grow to 200,000 b/d by the end of this year and could potentially rise to 400,000 b/d.

Most trains carry between 60-70,000 b/d so we're talking about 2 trains a day in April and 3-4 by the end of the year. Although some crude has travelled to Quebec by ship from Corpus Christi, TX and some has gone by train to Albany, NY and then by ship down the Hudson and out into the Atlantic to St John, NB. So this route to NB that the train that crashed was on may only be 1 train a day or less.

If Enbridge reverses its Line 9 from Sarnia, ON to Quebec most of this will come by pipeline.

We are working on a report on this.

----- Original Message -----
From: dsborowiec@aol.com
To: dsborowiec@aol.com
Sent: Tuesday, July 09, 2013 4:20 PM
Subject: An Open Letter to President Obama from Gasland Director Josh Fox

(Thanks to Elizabeth for sending this!)
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excerpt:

Above all, we are a movement of people, not corporations; we are a movement of neighbors who care deeply about the places we live and about this country as a whole.

Published on Tuesday, July 9, 2013 by Eco Watch

An Open Letter to President Obama from Gasland Director Josh Fox

by Josh Fox

I write to request a meeting with you and families directly impacted by oil and gas drilling and fracking—as documented in *Gasland Part II*—together with a small group of scientists and engineers who are also featured in the film. We would like to discuss health and economic impacts felt by communities located near the oil and gas fields, share our first-hand stories, and provide you with evidence on rates of well leakage, water contamination, air pollution and methane emissions.

We are aware that your administration has met with the natural gas industry and their representatives and lobbyists many times. We now ask you to meet with us: representatives of those suffering from unconventional drilling and fracking, and members of the scientific community who wish to inform you of the perils of this unprecedented push to drill.

We believe that the natural gas industry has not been forthcoming with your administration about the real effects of drilling and fracking on our water, air, land, climate, public health and safety—and on democracy itself. As such, we seek to discuss with you the dark side of fracking, a perspective that has not yet been presented to you with adequate weight or emphasis.

In 2008, when I was offered a gas lease on my land in the upper Delaware River watershed in Pennsylvania, I decided to investigate the effects of drilling and fracking around the nation. That investigation became the documentary *Gasland*. While filming, I discovered widespread water contamination, air pollution, methane leakage, land scarring and massive industrialization of previously rural, suburban or urban areas. **Most disturbingly of all, I discovered in the gasfields of America people who had lost control of their lives, their communities and their human and civil rights.**

Although I had never before made a documentary, *Gasland* was accepted at the Sundance Film Festival, picked up by HBO, nominated for the 2011 Academy Award for Best Documentary and received four Emmy nominations—winning one for my direction. The film has been aired on television in over 30 countries to an estimated audience of 50 million people.

I have now made a second film, *Gasland Part II*, which covers a new form of contamination—the capture

of our regulatory agencies by the oil and gas industry. I document industry's undue influence on your administration as well as on state and local regulators whose job is to protect the public health and safety. A striking pattern emerges: Time and again, regulators investigating citizens' concerns determine the gas development operation nearby is a clear cause of water contamination, only to walk away after protest from industry reaches an uncomfortable pitch. The film's portrayal of the exclusion of "we the people" from the dialogue about the future of energy in the United States should concern you. *Gasland Part II* premieres July 8, on HBO.

We thus respectfully request a meeting with you. More specifically, I wish to introduce you to members of seven families from disparate regions across the nation who have all had their lives ruined by drilling and fracking operations. These families are emblematic. They represent thousands of people who have had their basic rights trampled by drilling on nearby properties and by the attendant gas refining and delivery infrastructure. These citizens include—

- The Lipsky family in Texas, whose water was contaminated and made flammable by Range Resources;
- The Gee family in Pennsylvania, who, after four generations, were forced off their land by a six-well horizontal drill pad built by Shell on a neighboring property;
- The Fenton family in Wyoming, who have been battling Canadian drilling giant Encana and who are now suffering health problems from the air and water contamination around their house;
- The Tillman family of Dish, Texas, who were forced by polluted air to move from the town that Mr. Tillman was serving as mayor;
- The Switzer and Ely familes of Dimock, Pennsylvania, whose water was shown to be contaminated by both the federal Environmental Protection Agency and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection—only to receive a roller coaster ride of broken promises by both agencies; and
- The Bevins family from West Virginia, whose son CJ was killed on a drilling pad in New York as a result of an unsafe drilling site, and whose campaign has helped alert the country that workers in the oil and gas industry are seven times more likely to die on the job than workers in other industries.

In addition, I would like you to meet with the scientists in the film: Dr. Tony Ingraffea, Dr. Robert Howarth and Professor Mark Z. Jacobson.

Dr. Ingraffea from Cornell University, a former oil and gas industry researcher, will explain how the industry is incapable of ensuring the integrity of wells being drilled and how the industry's own science shows that wells are leaking at high rates, contaminating our country's precious groundwater. Dr. Howarth, also of Cornell, will describe how the release of methane, one of our most potent greenhouse gases, into the air from fracking and natural gas production render the use of fracked gas even more deleterious to the climate than burning coal. Professor Mark Z. Jacobson, director of Stanford University's Atmosphere and Energy Program, will explain that there is a way forward for America that is free of fossil fuels. As he and his colleagues have documented in a groundbreaking study, wind, water and solar resources available to us right now make it possible for our nation to claim true energy independence and protect the health and safety of the generations to come.

America has been forever changed by the sense of grassroots collective drive that your election in 2008 instilled in us as a nation. The grassroots movement that has sprung up across the country and across the world against fracking has all the enthusiasm, positivity, sense of history, endurance and resolve as the one that elected you our President.

When speaking to your grassroots campaign staff in 2012, you reminded them that the only way to fight the enormous influence of corporate cash and power in the election was the strength of "neighbor talking to neighbor," of communities coming together to fight for what is right. That is exactly what the grassroots movement against fracking is made of: people fighting for their communities locally, with an eye on the

bigger global challenges ahead. **Above all, we are a movement of people, not corporations; we are a movement of neighbors who care deeply about the places we live and about this country as a whole.** We believe that it is your desire to put the people's interests at the forefront of your political message and it is in this spirit that we ask you to meet with us.

President Obama, we support you. We support your earnest desire to fight climate change, but the science shows that your embrace of natural gas will undermine everything you are trying to accomplish in your plan. And the violation of health and property rights that inexorably accompany drilling and fracking operations undermines any claim of energy independence.

We urge you to meet with us as you have met with the gas industry. We are on your side. We do not wish to see your legacy inscribed by fracking chemicals in the ground, high levels of emissions and pollution in the air, ruined families, broken shards of the American dream and the terror felt by millions as the drilling industry descends on lands in 34 states. Do not let your legacy be a switch from coal to gas, a Pyrrhic victory, an exchange of one form of climate-killing pollution for another that, over its entire lifecycle, is just as calamitous. Instead, ground your energy policy in careful science and let your legacy include hearing the people out.

In the name of fairness and democracy, we implore that you meet with us, as you have met with the oil and gas industry.

We look forward to your reply. Thank you for considering this request.

The New York Times

Dot Earth

ANDREW REVKIN

July 8, 2013, 2:54 pm

The Long Chain of Responsibility Behind an Oily and Deadly Train Wreck

By ANDREW C. REVKIN

Around the smoldering, oil-soaked crater in the heart of Lac-Mégantic, a small Quebec town where an unmanned train with 72 tank cars carrying crude oil derailed and exploded early on Saturday, killing at least 13 people*, the search for victims and causes is still on.

Attention will soon focus on some misstep by a train crewman or maintenance worker or the like. But the chain of responsibility goes much further. While investigations proceed, here's some context to mull.

In case you missed it, the oil was being carried from America's new oil patch, the Bakken shale fields of North Dakota, to a St. John, New Brunswick, refinery that, according to the owner, Irving Energy, sends more than half of its 300,000 daily barrels of petroleum products back across the border to the northeastern United States.

As I wrote during the Gulf of Mexico oil disaster, as long as we depend heavily on oil, we all "own" a portion of every disaster related to oil extraction, transport or use.

An important article in the Montreal Gazette notes that even as Canada's conservative leader Stephen Harper conveyed his grief about the calamity, the government was deeply cutting the budget of the agency responsible for safeguarding train transport:

At a time when train shipments of crude oil are expected to skyrocket in Canada, the federal government is cutting funding for Transport Canada, the country's transportation regulator, by almost 30 per cent, down to $1.5 billion, according to government spending estimates for 2012-13 and 2013-14.

One would hope that, in the face of this tragedy, that gutting of those budgets will end. (Canada is hardly alone in

cutting budgets for important government agencies.)

Until long-term shifts in relevant policies — like stricter vehicle efficiency standards — more deeply curtail oil demand in the United States, the lack of pipeline capacity will continue to increase train transport of fuel from North American oil fields. As always, tradeoffs result.

The rising pressure for rail shipments was explored in depth earlier this year in "Busting Bottlenecks in the Bakken," an article in Fed Gazette, a publication of the Minnesota Federal Reserve (yes, weird, but it's a thorough, interesting piece) and in this Christian Science Monitor story: "Pipelines can't keep up with North American oil boom."

A helpful Bloomberg article today, "Quebec Disaster Spurs Rail-Versus-Pipelines Debate on Oil," digs in on the relative merits of pipeline and train transport of oil. But a quote in Ian Austen's story in The Times best conveys how the data on pipeline or rail safety can be interpreted differently depending on one's worldview:

Edward Whittingham, the executive director of the Pembina Institute, an environmental group based in Calgary, Alberta, said there was not conclusive research weighing the safety of the two shipment methods.

"The best data I've seen indicates," he said, "depending on your perspective, both are pretty much as safe as each other, or both are equally unsafe. There's safety and environmental risks inherent in either approach."

At Grist, John Upton offers an overheated analogy in rejecting debates about which transportation method is safer:

[T]he comparison obfuscates an obvious reality: The oil can't be moved safely at all. (Same goes for natural gas.)

After a string of pipeline and rail accidents in recent years, it's clear that letting the energy industry move incendiary bulk fluids around the continent is like tossing a book of matches into the crib to keep little Johnny happy while his folks stare at the television. And that's without even considering the climate impacts of the fossil-fuel mining binge, or the many hazards of fracking.

Of course, this description leaves out that it is consumer demand for petroleum products that is driving the shipments. It's nice to wish that the United States could magically go cold turkey on oil and other fuels overnight and simply stop all of those trains and shut down those pipelines.

But in the real world, the transition to new energy sources will take a very long time. That means choosing among a suite of imperfect options is unavoidable. My view is that, with strengthened standards and oversight, pipelines win out over rail for moving oil or related products.

But it's also vital that any push on expanding pipelines, or oil (or gas) extraction, has to be accompanied by a lockstep push on reducing demand and environmental impacts.

This is why President Obama needs to be sure he articulates a cogent overarching energy policy to accompany his relatively meaningless "all of the above" energy mantra.

Needless to say, the same is true for Canada and its leaders, as was effectively described in a piece by Peter Tertzakian in The Globe & Mail today:

Canada is one of the largest producers of primary energy resources. We have world scale reserves of oil, natural gas, coal, uranium, hydroelectric power, wood and other renewable sources too.

Yet despite our global energy stature, we have a sad lack of cohesive, pro-active thinking about how we should be producing, consuming and trading all our valuable energy resources, not just oil. Lac-Mégantic is a most unfortunate metaphor: how we think about energy is like a train without a conductor.

8:15 p.m. | Update | Andrew Leach, an energy and environmental economist at the Alberta School of Business of the University of Alberta, has predicted that the rail disaster will not boost prospects for pipeline transport of oil, but instead create new pressures on the oil business all around (most of which are appropriate and good, to my mind):

The fallout from the Lac-Mégantic tragedy will depend on what we learn about the ultimate causes and, as Paul Wells wrote here, that's a long way off. I expect, however, that there will be three first-order effects that will be very similar to those that followed the BP spill: 1) increased public consciousness of the dangers inherent in transporting oil and oil products and more aversion to having these products moved nearby; 2) increased calls for alternatives to oil rather than alternative means of transporting oil; and 3) decreased trust in regulators' and firms' abilities to sufficiently mitigate risks from transporting oil. If you're in the oil transportation business, these are negative impacts, whether you move oil by rail or by pipeline.

5:29 p.m. | Update | A report released by the International Energy Agency in May has a section on transport risks that is highly relevant (seen via the FuelFix blog):

"Increasing volumes of crude oil transported by rail raise questions of safety," the IEA said in its medium-term oil market report. [*link*] "Our analysis reveals that compared to pipelines, rail incident rates are higher while the opposite holds for spill rates."

5:28 p.m. | Updated * There were five confirmed deaths at the time of posting. I'll update the number as new counts are announced.

----- Original Message -----
From: Frack Check WV
To: dcsoinks@comcast.net
Sent: Wednesday, July 10, 2013 3:06 AM
Subject: Explosion Rocks Marcellus Well in WV, Workers Seriously Burned

Explosion Rocks Natural Gas Well in Marcellus Shale, Workers Seriously Burned

From the Article by Tara Lohan, AlterNet Project, July 8, 2013

A day after an explosion in the rural community of New Milton, West Virginia residents are still awaiting answers about the cause and the damage. The view from the Pitcocks' yard of the well flaring gas from the well pad where the explosion occurred on July 7, 2013.

An explosion at a nearby gas drilling well pad jostled John Pitcock awake around 4 a.m. on Sunday morning. Pitcock and his wife Diane moved with their sons from the Baltimore, Maryland area to rural New Milton, West Virginia in Doddridge County nearly a decade ago to enjoy a quiet country life. But when drilling companies began tapping the underlying Marcellus Shale in the area for natural gas reserves using high-volume horizontal hydraulic fracturing (or fracking), their peaceful country life disappeared.

The Pitcocks have been plagued by noise, lights, dust, emissions and truck traffic after a neighbor leased his land to a drilling company, which has erected several well pads on the land adjacent to their property. Over the last year trees have been clear cut, miles roads built through their rural neighborhood, and drilling begun. On Friday, July 5 I visited their home and witnessed gas being flared from a well through the night — the light illuminated their front yard from a ridge top about 2,000 feet away.

John Pitcock reported that the well continued to flare through the next day and night and another well beside it was loudly venting gas on and off. What became a nuisance turned to a real fright during the early morning hours of Sunday as John describes in this video here.

The Pitcocks were initially told (after driving off their property to find employees working nearby and emergency response officials) that they needed to evacuate, but were later told it was optional and they could remain. Since then conflicting reports have emerged about the number of workers injured and the severity of their injuries at the well pad, which is officially called the Hinterer 2H well on the Ruddy Alt pad and is operated by Antero Resources. The West Virginia Gazette-Mail reported at least seven injured and at four or five workers were flown to West Penn Burn Center in Pittsburgh.

The West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection and the Doddridge County director of emergency services did not return phone calls as of publication. While the cause of the fire hasn't been determined, writing for the Gazette-Mail, David Gutman explained that this is not the first safety issue that Antero has had recently:

Last August a spark at an Antero-owned well in Harrison County ignited methane gas several hundred feet underground, causing a fireball and a fire that burned for about an hour. Three workers were injured in that fire. WV-DEP cited Antero for failure to maintain well control for that incident.

DEP has cited Antero for 17 violations of state code in the past three years. Those have been primarily environmental violations — for things like failing to prevent waste runoff, failure to report discharges and contaminating waterways. One violation, from January 4, 2013, warned, "Imminent danger water supplys [sic] threatened by allowing pollutants to escape and flow into the waters of the state."

In June of last year Antero was drilling using water in Harrison County when they accidentally repressurized some old water wells, causing several geysers, one about 10 feet high, that flooded one nearby home and several garages.

In March 2011, state regulators shut down an Antero gas well in Harrison County after mud contaminated with drilling chemicals spilled into a nearby stream.

John Pitcock says that he doesn't think companies should be drilling in this manner in proximity to people's homes.

NOTE: Tara Lohan, a senior editor at AlterNet, has just launched the new project Hitting Home, chronicling extreme energy extraction. She is the editor of two books on the global water crisis, including most recently, "Water Matters: Why We Need to Act Now to Save Our Most Critical Resource."

----- Original Message -----
From: Super Man
To: Donald C.
Sent: Tuesday, July 09, 2013 8:40 PM
Subject: Fw: Fwd: Pennsylvania Legislature's bill allowing easier pooling of gas well drilling leases draws criticism | TribLIVE

Subject: Fwd: Pennsylvania Legislature's bill allowing easier pooling of gas well drilling leases draws criticism | TribLIVE

http://triblive.com/business/headlines/4290179-74/drilling-pooling-gas#axzz2YVpI9dA3

CHARLESTON GAZETTE

FirstEnergy to close 2 more coal plants

July 9, 2013 by Ken Ward Jr.

The Hatfield's Ferry plant in Masontown, Pa. Photo via FirstEnergy

Here's today's news from FirstEnergy:

FirstEnergy Corp. (NYSE: FE) announced today that it expects to deactivate two coal-fired power plants located in Pennsylvania by October 9, 2013. The decision is based on the cost of compliance with current and future environmental regulations in conjunction with the continued low market price for electricity.

The plants scheduled to be deactivated are Hatfield's Ferry Power Station in Masontown, Pa., and Mitchell Power Station in Courtney, Pa.

FirstEnergy noted in its announcement:

The total capacity of these plants is 2,080 megawatts, representing approximately 10 percent of the company's

total generating capacity, but about 30 percent of the estimated $925 million cost to comply with the Environmental Protection Agency's Mercury and Air Toxics Standards (MATS).

It's worth noting that Hatfield's Ferry had not so long ago been retrofitted with sulfur dioxide "scrubbers", and had more recently been under consideration for a fuel switch to natural gas. FirstEnergy had previously announced closures of six plants in Ohio, Pennsylvania and Maryland, and three plants in West Virginia.

And while Hatfield's Ferry had new scrubbers, the toxic stuff generated by burning coal has to go somewhere, and environmental groups were concerned about the water pollution from the scrubber waste at the facility.

This entry was posted on Tuesday, July 9, 2013
THE STATE JOURNAL

FirstEnergy: Hatfield's Ferry similar to Harrison, but too expensive to run

Posted: Jul 09, 2013 1:05 PM EST Updated: Jul 09, 2013 3:21 PM EST
By Pam Kasey

Citing the cost of environmental compliance and a weak market for electricity, FirstEnergy announced July 9 that it expects this fall to deactivate two coal-fired power plants in Pennsylvania.

The company's southwest Pennsylvania Hatfield's Ferry and Mitchell power stations — not to be confused with AEP's Mitchell Power Station in West Virginia — have been scheduled for closure, subject to a review for possible grid reliability implications.

Both are owned by FirstEnergy's competitive subsidiary Allegheny Energy Supply.

Together, the two power stations represent about 10 percent of FirstEnergy's total generating capacity, according to the company, but about 30 percent of the estimated $925 million cost to comply with the Environmental Protection Agency's Mercury and Air Toxics Standards, or MATS.

Mitchell is an older power plant with less than 400 megawatts' capacity.

But Hatfield's Ferry is larger and more modern. Constructed about 1970, it has a capacity of about 1,700 MW and uses current supercritical technology. The completion of its scrubber was announced only a few years ago, in 2010; the shared cost of the scrubbers at Hatfield's Ferry and Fort Martin power stations was $1.3 billion.

It's similar in size and vintage to the company's Harrison power station near Clarksburg that is not proposed for closure — but there are significant differences, according to FirstEnergy Vice President of Fossil Engineering and Construction George Farah.

"The biggest difference is that Harrison has something called an SCR, selective catalytic reduction, that was a retrofit we put on Harrison and Pleasants stations about 10 years ago," Farah said. "That reduces nitrous oxide but also helps to reduce mercury — so Harrison having an SCR allows us to comply with MATS more cheaply than in Hatfield's case, a plant that does not have an SCR."

In addition, the types of scrubbers the two plants have for reducing sulfur dioxide emissions are different, he said, and that also has implications for future costs.

"The type of scrubber that Harrison has doesn't discharge effluent — it's largely a zero-liquid-discharge type of system," Farah said. "With Hatfield, it does discharge into the river and we have permits for that, but as those regulations get tougher Hatfield may need a wastewater treatment plant that Harrison would not need."

Both plants would have costs in complying with any future limitations on carbon dioxide emissions.

The retirement of Hatfield's Ferry is significant, according to analysts at UBS.

"While FirstEnergy has announced a number of retirements in recent years, Hatfield's Ferry is the first supercritical, low-heat rate plant, demonstrating just how tough the current environment is for even lower-cost (Northern Appalachian)-coal generators," read a UBS e-mail about the announcement.

"We see today's announcement by FirstEnergy as part of a 'second wave' of coal plant capitulations in (regional grid manager PJM Interconnection's region)," the e-mail read.

FirstEnergy was reported last fall as considering retrofitting Hatfield's Ferry to burn natural gas in addition to coal, but it has rejected that idea.

The company considered retrofit or conversion at all of its coal plants, Farah said, but found that it is both expensive and creates inefficiencies that undermine any possible cost benefit.

"You'd need new burners, a gas regulation system, gas brought out to the facility, fire protection systems … and ultimately the plant is less efficient," he said. "You would have to have gas even cheaper than it is now for a very sustained period to justify the capital investment. We believe that a plant designed to burn gas is the right way to do it rather than converting a plant that wasn't designed for it."

About 380 plant employees and generation-related positions are expected to be affected by the plant closures. Eligible employees will receive severance benefits through the FirstEnergy plan or as provided by their collective bargaining agreement, the company said.

With regard to the implications for West Virginia coal, Hatfield's Ferry got about 14 percent of its coal from West Virginia in 2012: 530,000 tons from the Prime No. 1 mine run by Morgantown-based coal producer Mepco.

FirstEnergy said its generation fleet after the deactivations would be composed of 56 percent coal, 22 percent nuclear, 13 percent renewables and 9 percent gas or oil, and it would have a generating capacity of more than 18,000 megawatts.

With the deactivation of these two plants, in addition to the nine plants the company announced for deactivation last year, the company said, nearly 100 percent of its power would come from resources that are either non- or low-emitting such as nuclear, hydro, natural gas and scrubbed coal units.

About $650 million the company expects to spend on MATS-related control technology on its remaining facilities will reduce emissions of nitrogen oxides by 84 percent, sulfur dioxide by 95 percent and mercury by 91 percent below 1990 levels.

In addition, the company expects to reduce carbon dioxide emissions 20 to 30 percent below 1990 levels by 2020, almost entirely due to the closures of coal plants, Farah said.

The plant deactivations are subject to review for reliability impacts by PJM.

Three contractors' workers injured in Sunday Antero wellpad explosion

Posted: Jul 08, 2013 11:06 AM EST Updated: Jul 09, 2013 2:58 PM EST
By Pam Kasey

Update 3 p.m. Tuesday

Antero spokesman Al Schopp said "a couple" of the five injured workers who are being treated at the West Penn Hospital Burn Center are doing better, while some remain in serious condition.

Updated 4:50 p.m. Monday

A Sunday morning explosion at an Antero Resources wellpad in Doddridge County injured five workers from three

contracting companies.

Three workers from Nabors Completion and Production Service and one each from C and R Downhole Drilling and Willowbend Investments Inc. were hospitalized, according to the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

They were flown to the Burn Center at Western Pennsylvania, or West Penn, Hospital in Pittsburgh. Monday afternoon, four were listed in serious condition and one was stable, according to Antero spokesman Al Schopp.

The company is not going to release the names of the victims, Schopp said. He did affirm that the incident injured five workers, not eight as was widely reported on Sunday.

Nearby resident Diane Pitcock said in an email that two explosions rattled the windows of her home at about 4 a.m. Sunday.

Antero Vice President Kevin Kilstrom told media sources on Sunday that there are three wells on the Ruddy Alt wellpad in New Milton where the explosion occurred.

Mid-day Monday, the state Department of Environmental Protection released a few more details — mainly unofficial observations, because determining the cause of the explosion is not the responsibility of the West Virginia DEP, but of OSHA.

The source of the ignition seems, pre-investigation, to have been a pump at the third well on the site, DEP spokesperson Kathy Cosco said Office of Oil and Gas supervisor Rick Campbell told her. The pump, which had malfunctioned, was being used to push data logging equipment down into the horizontal wellbore, which Cosco clarified had been drilled and hydraulically fractured, by pumping fluid behind it.

The pump is run by a diesel engine.

The fluid was "produced water" — fluid that comes back up from wells during gas production and contains some level of potentially explosive volatile organic compounds, and is sometimes re-used for purposes such as this — that was contained in two tanks next to the pump.

The tanks "ruptured," Cosco said Campbell told her. While Campbell was distinguishing between the sense of "splitting open" as opposed to "exploding," his description did not rule out the possibility that fumes that had volatilized and accumulated inside the tanks exploded, she said.

Again, this is speculation; DEP's real business on the site is determining whether any environmental contamination resulted.

Although fluid did spill from the tanks, the lining and berm at the site contained the spill and it was vacuumed up, Cosco said. A DEP inspector on site is confirming that no fluid reached waterways.

Antero spokesman Schopp said the company has hired two independent companies to investigate and determine the cause of the explosion.

Antero is one of the several largest natural gas producers in West Virginia. It is especially active in Doddridge and nearby counties.

Tradition and temptation discussed as Amish debate fracking

Posted: Jul 09, 2013 2:28 PM EST Updated: Jul 09, 2013 2:28 PM EST

JULIE CARR SMYTH,Associated Press
KEVIN BEGOS,Associated Press

BALTIC, Ohio (AP) — In parts of Ohio and Pennsylvania where horse-drawn buggies clip-clop at the pace of a bygone era, Amish communities are debating a new temptation — the large cash royalties that can come with the boom in oil and gas drilling.

In some ways, Amish attitudes toward hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, are as different from the outside world as their clothes and traditions. Instead of worries about air and water pollution, they're focusing on people's souls.

"Amish are no different than anybody else. The power of big money can bring spiritual corruption," said Jerry Schlabach, an Amish resident of Berlin, Ohio. "If we can keep our values and adhere to biblical principle, then it can be a very positive thing," he said.

Reuben Troyer, who recently signed a drilling lease for his 140-acre farm just east of the market town of New Bedford, Ohio, said he feels comfortable with the process itself.

"I guess I feel they know what they're doing, and they'll take care of themselves," Troyer said.

The stakes can be huge. While oil and gas wells have been common in parts of Ohio and Pennsylvania for more than 100 years, they typically didn't lead to huge payments to landowners. But over the past few years, hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, has led to bigger wells that can generate hundreds of thousands, or even millions, of dollars in royalties for a property holder.

During fracking, large volumes of water, along with sand and hazardous chemicals, are injected underground to break rock apart and free the oil and gas. The process has led to a boom in energy production in many states, but also concerns about air and water pollution.

Along the narrow bending roads of Amish country in Ohio and Pennsylvania, many families are sitting atop valuable deposits of oil and natural gas locked in the Utica and Marcellus Shale rock formations. They tend to view the wells as a part of life and look forward to the added income a lease can bring.

Local leaders in Ohio say nearly every farmer in the region has an old oil well, so it was no surprise when energy companies came knocking to drill bigger, more lucrative shale wells.

About 45 percent of the nation's Amish population is concentrated in Ohio and Pennsylvania, with 63,000 in each state out of a total of 280,000 nationwide. The Amish trace their roots to the Protestant Reformation and restrict interactions with the modern world and technology. They dress plainly, don't hold political office and are conscientious objectors during wars.

Historian Donald B. Kraybill said that some Amish accept drilling partly because they "have a strong sense of God's creation," and that includes oil and natural gas.

"If they can find ways to capitalize on the resources under the ground, they don't see a problem with that," he said.

To the Amish, Schlabach said, "the world was created for the benefit of man. And nature, as we see it, is made to be used as long as it's kept in proper perspective."

For Susan Mast, an Amish wife and mother, the issue hit close to home last summer, when an energy company purchased land adjacent to their quiet, well-manicured Ohio farm near the village of Baltic and began fracking.

"It's not as noisy as we thought it would be," said Mast, who has seven children. The well, on land owned by her parents, is in production now, but she said the drilling phase didn't bother the youngsters.

"They enjoyed watching what was going on," she said.

But there are some practical concerns about all the industrial activity that comes with the recent shale drilling.

"I'm not excited about it, with all the traffic, with all the horses," said Melvin Yoder, who owns a 58-acre farm in

central Ohio.

Kraybill noted that rules vary widely among Amish communities, but that there is "considerable concern" among church leaders that drilling money could create huge income disparities within the same community.

The concerns over the effects of fracking extend to other energy sources, too.

In New Wilmington, Pa., several Amish men and women said their community doesn't permit solar panels, though some people are signing gas leases.

Kraybill, co-author of the new book "The Amish," said he wasn't surprised to hear that traditional communities like New Wilmington have concerns over solar power since the Amish "are reticent to display things or have public displays of the technology" and are cautious about electricity.

Sam Stoltzfus, an Amish farmer in Gordonville, Pa., said that there was some resistance at first to solar power there, but that it's widely used now. On the issue of gas drilling leases, Stoltzfus said outsiders often overlook some important facts about the Amish lifestyle.

"It doesn't matter where you go in America, if a farmer doesn't have some sort of subsidy, he is not going to be able to survive," Stoltzfus said, adding that a gas drilling boom in Danville, about two hours north, helped the Amish communities there by generating considerable carpentry and repair work.

And the Amish value work for more than the income it brings, Schlabach said.

"Human beings are by nature lazy. Free money basically equals free time," he said. "Idleness is the devil's workshop."

Still, Schlabach hopes that strong Amish family and church traditions will enable people to use fracking wealth wisely, perhaps even to help start new communities in other states.

"Use it to help others rather than consuming it on yourself," Schlabach said. "Life doesn't consist of your possessions. Possessions are nothing, and it is what you do for other people that lasts."

But whether the fracking boom helps or hurts the Amish is up to the community itself, he said, since it's just another chapter in an ongoing struggle to maintain their beliefs in a fast-moving, modern world.

"The inflow of all the money is going to really expose the spiritual level of the community," Schlabach said. "If it does corrupt in a big way, then we know we have drifted spiritually."

—

Begos reported from Pittsburgh and New Wilmington, Pa. Follow him at https://twitter.com/kbegos

Hearing to address gas drill ordinance for Jefferson Hills

About Patrick Cloonan
McKeesport Daily News Staff Reporter Patrick Cloonan can be reached at 412-664-9161

By Patrick Cloonan
McKeesport Daily News

Published: Tuesday, July 9, 2013, 4:41 a.m.
Updated 24 hours ago

Jefferson Hills plans to be ready if and when the state Supreme Court acts on the state's oil and gas Act 13, and is taking steps to regulate the mapping of oil, gas and whatever else is underground.
Borough council voted unanimously on Monday to schedule a public hearing on Aug. 14 at 6 p.m. concerning a long-delayed oil and gas ordinance.
The high court heard arguments last October on an appeal of a Commonwealth Court ruling that shot down Act 13's limits on local governments' ability to regulate oil and gas drilling, but has issued no decision yet.
Borough officials hope the lower court's decision will be upheld. If not, borough planner and zoning director Allen Cohen said, "It's back to the drawing board."
Council voted 3-1 to approve an ordinance that would regulate geophysical and seismic testing in the borough, and by the same vote OK'd a separate agreement with Geokinetics USA Inc. allowing it to conduct a survey at Beedle Park and on borough-maintained streets.
Council vice president James Weber was joined by Councilmen Tracey Khalil and David Montgomery in voting for the measures. Councilwoman Kathleen Reynolds voted no.
"Different taxpayers have come to my house and said they're not for it," Reynolds said. "Some were very concerned."
Her colleagues said they too are concerned, but felt they had to vote in favor.
Council president Christopher King and Councilwomen Janice Cmar and Vickie Ielase were absent.
Cohen was principal author of the Geokinetics agreement with public works director Tom Lovell, and finance director and acting boroughmanager Andrew McCreery.
"Both parties have used whatever leverage they had and came up with this agreement," McCreery said.
The agreement bonds the borough's roads against the heavy vehicles that will be used for the survey.
It adds the borough to Geokinetics' insurance for up to $1 million per incident.
It also bars the use of explosives or shot holes as part of the survey of borough properties. Usually 2.2-pound dynamite charges are employed.
Geokinetics agreed to pay a $642 permit fee for the work in Beedle Park.
McCreery said Geokinetics "verbally said they will comply with this (new) ordinance."
The ordinance and agreement are part of the borough's response to a canvassing effort that began in February.
Patrick Cloonan is a staff writer for Trib Total Media. He can be reached at 412-664-9161 ext. 1967, or pcloonan@tribweb.com.
by Michael Bradwell
Business Editor
mbradwell@observer-reporter.com
Washington Co.

Local businessman testifies on pipeline proposal

Tuesday, July 9,2013

Alex Paris of Alex Paris Contracting Co., Avella, second from right, testifies Tuesday in Washington, D.C., before the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

An Avella businessman testified in Washington, D.C., Tuesday in support of legislation proposing to streamline the permitting of pipeline projects related to the transport of natural gas.

House Bill 1900, known as the Natural Gas Pipeline Permitting Reform Act is proposed by U.S. Rep. Michael Pompeo, R-Kansas, as an amendment to the federal Energy Act of 2005. It would require that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission approve or deny a requested pipeline certificate no later than 12 months after providing public notice of the pipeline application.

The bill also would codify FERC's requirements that all relevant government agencies approve or deny a permit application within 90 days after FERC's notice of completion of the final environmental document with the possibility of a 30-day extension for certain situations. It also would require that a permit goes into effect if an agency does not issue a response within the 90-day time frame.

"Natural gas is going to be a big part of our energy future, but only if we cut the red tape" associated with approving natural gas pipeline projects, stated Rep. Fred Upton, R-Mich.

During the hearing before the Committee on Energy and Commerce in the Rayburn House Office Building, FERC Commissioner Phillip Moeller told the committee that the proposal could work, providing that applications from pipeline developers are deemed complete.

However, Moeller noted that FERC reviews applications from a wide range of pipeline projects from simple upgrades to existing lines to complex new projects covering hundreds of miles.

Some congressmen, like Henry Waxman, D-Calif., argued that FERC has a good record of approvals. It was noted that from 2009 to 2012, the commission approved 69 major pipeline projects covering 3,000 miles in 30 states.

Others on the committee said the change would speed up the permitting process to meet the spiraling growth of America's natural gas production that is driving the need for additional pipeline infrastructure.

A 2012 study by the Interstate National Gas Association of America found that pipeline permitting delays of more than 90 days have risen 28 percent nationwide since 2005, while delays of 180 days or more have risen 20 percent.

Alex Paris, of Alex Paris Contracting in Avella, was introduced to the committee by U.S. Rep. Tim Murphy, R-Upper St. Clair, chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee. Paris stated that his company has constructed 350,000 feet of pipeline in the Marcellus and Utica shale plays over the past several years.

"We are constantly hiring and training new employees due to our pipeline projects," said Paris, who said his employee total has moved from 250 people in 2008 to a current count of 450.

He also noted that last year, the company purchased $16 million worth of trucks and new equipment.

But delays in pipeline projects in the region have also caused layoffs and idled equipment for his company, said Paris, who testified in favor of the bill on behalf of the Distribution Contractors Association.

During Tuesday's hearing, two others testified against the proposal.

Maya van Rossum of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network, said speeding up the permitting process would have detrimental environmental effects on the Delaware River basin, especially for agencies attempting to ensure that projects comply with the Clean Water Act.

Rick Kessler of the Pipeline Safety Trust, said that while the trust isn't opposed to new pipeline projects, said the group "sees no policy rationale for a one-size-fits-all" approach to pipeline permitting.

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By

by Bob Niedbala
Staff Writer
niedbala@observer-reporter.com
Washington Co.

FirstEnergy to deactivate 2 area power plants

Tuesday, July 9,2013

FirstEnergy Corp.'s Mitchell Power Station in Union Township is one of two plants the company is closing. Hatfield's Ferry Power Station in Carmichaels is also scheduled to close.
Scott Beveridge / Observer-Reporter
Order a Print
FirstEnergy Corp. announced Tuesday it plans to deactivate two coal-fired power plants in Washington and Greene counties because of the high cost of bringing them into compliance with Environmental Protection Agency standards.

Mitchell Power Station in Union Township, Washington County, and Hatfield's Ferry Power Station near Carmichaels, Greene County, are scheduled to close Oct. 9, resulting in the layoffs of 380 employees – 174 at Hatfield's Ferry, 77 at Mitchell and the remainder in generation-related and support positions.

Eligible employees will get severance packages totaling about $16 million.

"The closures are based on the cost of compliance with current and future environmental regulations as well as the low market price for electricity," said Stephanie Thornton, spokeswoman for FirstEnergy, the Akron, Ohio-based parent of West Penn Power.

She cited the Mercury and Air Toxics Standards, which have already been implemented and limit mercury emissions, as well as regulations expected in the next couple of years. Thornton added that prices for electricity have remained low the past few years, and are projected to remain low for the next three years.

The cost for FirstEnergy to comply with the MATS regulations is estimated at $925 million, Thornton said. About 30 percent of those costs, or $278 million, would be required to bring Hatfield's Ferry and Mitchell into compliance, she said.

The cost of upgrading older, coal-fired plants is high. Mitchell was built in 1949 and Hatfield's Ferry, in Monongahela Township, opened in 1969. They have a total capacity of 2,080 megawatts, a formidable 10 percent of the company's generating capacity.

PJM Interconnection, the transmission operator that controls the areas where Hatsfield's Ferry and Mitchell exist, will review the shutdowns for any reliability impacts.

Larry Spahr hopes that his town, and the immediate vicinity, will remain economically viable. He is a supervisor in Union Township, which will lose tax revenues as the host community of the Mitchell station.

But he is more concerned about the loss of jobs.

"It's their livelihood," Spahr said. "Many of the employees down there are from Monongahela, New Eagle and Charleroi."

Bob Whalen, president of Utility Workers Union of America Local 102, could not be reached for comment.

Political response was swift and angry Tuesday.

"This is devastating for our region. That's 380 people who will be without jobs, 380 families that are going to be impacted by this," said state Rep. Pam Snyder, D-Jefferson Township.

The closings, she said, could have a "domino effect," particularly in an area such as Greene County, where coal is integral to the economy.

Snyder said she had sent emails to coal operators in the area Tuesday morning in an attempt to gauge the impact of the closing on their operations.

"We are the heart of the coal industry and I'm very concerned about how this is going to impact our local coal mines and coal mining jobs … the long-term repercussions are still unknown," she said.

Snyder said it will be her top priority to make sure programs are available to assist the displaced employees and to ensure the closings do not have an impact on the reliability of the electrical grid.

U.S. Rep. Tim Murphy, chairman of the House Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, lamented the deactivations while criticizing the Obama administration.

"This is devastating for those families who had good jobs and for the communities they live in," Murphy, R-Upper St. Clair, said in a telephone interview Tuesday.

"What this also is is this administration saying it is going to ignore any efforts by power companies to invest in cleaner plants and, in fact, punishing power plants for investing huge amounts in cleaning up.

"I spoke to the president and he said he prefers clean coal. But (with this announcement), it's clear that's not the way it is."

The closing of Hatfield's Ferry will come just 3 1/2 years after FirstEnergy's predecessor, Allegheny Power, invested $650 million in the plant to install scrubbers to remove sulfur dioxide and mercury from the emissions. The scrubbers came online in late 2009.

The scrubbers, however, will not do enough to help the plant meet new emission standards, Thornton said, "It would still need additional investment to comply with regulations."

Mitchell does not have scrubbers.

Republican U.S. Sen. Pat Toomey was as hot as Murphy over the closure announcement. He said in a news release: "These unemployed Pennsylvanians are unfortunate casualties in the president's 'War on Coal,' which I will continue to fight against in the Senate … coal-fired plants also have gone to impressive lengths to reduce emissions. Nevertheless, the Obama administration continues to implement policies that will make energy more expensive."

State Rep. Rick Saccone, R-Elizabeth, blistered the EPA over what he considers to be its overregulation of coal, while also criticizing the administration.

"Our nation's activist EPA has once again hurt our workers and our local economy," he said. "This is another skirmish with the current administration and its 'War on Coal.'"

State Sen. Tim Solobay, D-Canonsburg, said in another news release that "the federal government is costing real people real jobs by pushing ahead with theoretical power-plant standards. Forcing the closure of reliable power plants will drive up the price of electricity for consumers and do little to improve the environment."

The Sierra Club has a different view.

"This is good news for communities in Southwestern Pennsylvania who will benefit from healthier air and cleaner water," Tom Schuster, Pennsylvania campaign representative for the environmental organization, said in a release.

Randy Francisco, the club's organizing representative in Western Pennsylvania, said: "These plants are both over 40 years old and have been making people sick for too long. Retiring the Mitchell plant and ceasing to dump dangerous coal ash in unlined pits will mean the Monongahela River can continue on its path to a vibrant recovery and families will have safer water to drink."

Patrick Grenter, head of an environmental watchdog group, was not surprised by the planned plant closures.

"I think (they) basically reflect the change in the view of the reality of coal. It's truly a fuel of the past," said Grenter, executive director of the Center for Coalfield Justice, a downtown Washington organization that addresses environmental issues related to fossil fuel extraction.

Grenter said he can appreciate the high cost of operating an environmentally efficient coal-fired plant, but that doing so is necessary.

"Those are the costs of preventing people from getting sick, from dying, from streams and air being polluted. Finally, steps are being taken to make companies internalize instead of externalize these costs.

"As this happens, we're seeing that coal is not economically viable."

Staff writer Scott Beveridge contributed to this report.

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